

Message Text

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R 241341Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8674
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DUBLIN 2690

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UR EI
SUBJECT: IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS USSR

REF: DUBLIN 2421 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE RUSSIANS WENT ALL OUT TO IMPRESS THE IRISH DELEGATION, FIRST OF ITS KIND, AND ALTHOUGH THE VETERAN DIPLOMATS WERE NOT PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED, THE VISIT AS A WHOLE CAME THROUGH AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS SUCCESS FOR THE SOVIETS. THE ONLY SMALL FRICTION CAME IN THE NEGOTIATION OF A COMMUNIQUE, BUT THE RUSSIANS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN UNUSUALLY FORTHCOMING. THE SUBSTANTIVE TALKS COVERED MUCH OF THE WORLD, AND, DISAPPOINTINGLY TO THE IRISH, NOT MUCH WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN IMPROVING THE EXISTING BILATERAL
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TRADE IMBALANCE. END SUMMARY

2. THE RUSSIANS APPARENTLY WENT ALL OUT TO IMPRESS THE FOUR MAN IRISH DELEGATION ON THE FIRST VISIT OF AN IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER SINCE OPENING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 1973. THE VETERAN FITZGERALD AND HIS EQUALLY EXPERIENCED ASSISTANTS,

STATE SECRETARY PAUL KEATING AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES DORR AND HEASLIP, EXPRESSED THEMSELVES AS "NOT TAKEN IN." BUT THE FOUR IRISH REPORTERS WHO WENT ALONG, AND WHO ALSO GOT ROYAL TREATMENT, CAME BACK RESEMBLING SOMETHING CLOSE TO RUSSOPHILES. WE HAVE BEEN GETTING FULSOME STORIES IN OUR PAPERS. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE QUICKLY GOING TO LOSE THE LOUD HARRASSMENT WHICH IS THEIR NORMAL FATE HERE. IRELAND IS STILL A VERY CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC COUNTRY WHICH BELIEVES THAT "GODLESS" COMMUNISTS ARE IN LEAGUE WITH SATAN.

3. WE HAVE TALKED TO SEVERAL OF THE PARTICIPANTS, AND RECEIVED A LONG BRIEFING FROM POLITICAL DIRECTOR NOEL DORR. HE STRESSED THAT THE TRIP (WHICH INCLUDED MOSCOW, TBILISI AND LENINGRAD), WAS MORE CEREMONIAL THAN SUBSTANTIVE. IN FACT THE IRISH WERE SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED THAT THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO TALK MORE ON BREAD AND BUTTER ECONOMIC ISSUES. FITZGERALD TRIED TO SEE THE FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER BUT DID NOT SUCCEED. HE DID HAVE LENGTHY TALKS WITH GROMYKO AND PODGORNYY. BREZHNEV WAS APPARENTLY OUT OF TOWN (HE WAS NEVER ON THE SCHEDULE).

4. ACCORDING TO DORR THE ONLY REAL FRICTION CAME IN NEGOTIATING A COMMUNIQUE. THIS WAS THE IRISH DIPLOMATS' FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE COMMUNIQUE BUSINESS, BUT THEY SEEM TO HAVE LEFT THE FIELD WITH HONOR (AFTER AN ALL-NIGHT SESSION) AND WE CAN DETECT NO GIVEAWAYS IN THE FINAL DOCUMENT (BEING POUCHED TO WASHINGTON). DORR DESCRIBED WITH AMUSED ADMIRATION THE GREAT ACTING ABILITIES OF THE RUSSIANS, WHO PROJECTED SURPRISE AND A DEEP HURT WHEN THEIR ORIGINAL DRAFT, WHICH DORR SAID WAS "QUITE INCREDIBLE," WAS REJECTED

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OUT OF HAND BY THE IRISH. AFTER MUCH TALK THE RUSSIANS FINALLY AGREED TO EXPUNGE SUCH ITEMS AS "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE", THE BREZHNEV PROPOSALS (THE IRISH SAID THIS WAS NOT A BILATERAL AFFAIR), AND VARIOUS SOVIET DISARMAMENT PROPOSALS. THE IRISH WERE EVEN IMPOLITE ENOUGH TO REFUSE TO INCLUDE A PHRASE ABOUT FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, POINTING OUT THAT THE SIZE OF THE IRISH NUCLEAR ARSENAL MAKES THIS SOMEWHAT IRRELEVANT, NOT TO MENTION THE NPT WHICH ALSO MAKES IT IRRELEVANT. DURING THE COMMUNIQUE SESSION THE HARDEST TIME WAS HAD ON CSCE, AND THE IRISH WERE PUZZLED BY THE SOVIETS' TACTICS. THE ORIGINAL (SOVIET) DRAFT MERELY REPEATED THE EXACT LANGUAGE OF THE FINAL ACT IN DESCRIBING BELGRADE. HOWEVER, HALFWAY THROUGH THE NEGOTIATING SESSION THE RUSSIANS ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WISHED TO CHANGE THE LANGUAGE TO INDICATE THAT BELGRADE SHOULD BE A "FUTURE ORIENTED" EVENT. SINCE THE RUSSIANS REFUSED TO INCLUDE ANY REFERENCE TO A REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION, THE IRISH WOULD ACCEPT NO LANGUAGE, AND THE FINAL DOCUMENT MAKES NO REFERENCE TO BELGRADE. THE IRISH BELIEVE THEY MIGHT HAVE GAINED A POINT WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE

FOLLOWING: "THEY UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION BY ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE OF ALL THE PROVISIONS OF THE FINAL ACT WITHOUT EXCEPTION." THE IRISH ALSO THOUGHT THEY HAD SCORED A POINT WHEN THE COMMUNIQUE TALKED ABOUT A "BETTER BALANCE AND STRUCTURE OF TRADE" BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES: THIS LATTER BEING BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT OF THE VISIT TO THE IRISH PUBLIC, WHO DO NOT GET TOO EXCITED BY CSCE, UNGA, ETC.

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5. EMBASSY MOSCOW HAS REPORTED THE LENGTHY TALKS WITH GROMYKO (MOSCOW 20056 AND ANOTHER TEL WHICH WE HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED), AND THUS WE WILL NOT DUPLICATE THE EFFORT. ONE POINT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST CONCERNING THE GENEVA MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE: WE ASKED DORR IF GROMYKO TALKED ABOUT "PLO PRESENCE" OR MERELY "PALESTINIAN" PRESENCE. DORR WENT TO HIS SHORTHAND NOTES OF THE CONVERSATION AND REPLIED THAT IN NO INSTANCE DID GROMYKO MENTION THE PLO OR PLO LEADERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, ONLY TALKING OF "PALESTINIANS." DORR SAID THAT HE ASSUMED GROMYKO MEANT THE PLO, BUT WAS NOT SURE.

6. ALTHOUGH THE VISIT DID NOT TURN OUT TO BE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH BILATERAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, AS THE IRISH HAD HOPED, A FEW
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TOPICS OF ECONOMIC INTEREST WERE TOUCHED UPON. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNHAPPY FOR SOME TIME WITH BI-LATERAL TRADE IMBALANCE WHICH IS HIGHLY IN THE SOVIETS FAVOR. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT IS CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS USE FOR VARIOUS IRISH GOODS WHICH ARE OF HIGH QUALITY. FURTHERMORE, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT SOVIETS, WITH A STATE TRADING SYSTEM, CAN DIRECT A HIGHER PROPORTION OF THEIR PURCHASES TOWARD IRELAND IF THEY SO WISH. DORR SAID THAT NOTHING TANGIBLE RESULTED FROM THE ECONOMIC TALKS BUT HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE DELEGATION IMPRESSED UPON THE SOVIETS THE "POLITICAL IMPORTANCE" OF TRADE. THE PROPOSED SOVIET/IRISH CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT WAS BRIEFLY DISCUSSED BUT WITH NO RESULTS. NO OTHER ECONOMIC TOPICS WORTHY OF NOTE WERE DISCUSSED.

7. COMMENT: SINCE OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 1973 THE IRISH HAVE BEEN WARY BUT FLATTERED WITH THE ATTENTION THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE SOVIETS. IT HAS BEEN A BEAUTY-AND-BEAST SITUATION AS SEEN FROM HERE, WITH THE SOVIETS BEING VERY MUCH THE SUITORS TO THE COY BUT INCREASINGLY ACCEPTING IRISH (BOTH GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL PUBLIC). THE RUSSIANS OBVIOUSLY HAVE SOMETHING TO GAIN AND NOTHING TO LOSE. THE WISER HEADS HERE RECOGNIZE THIS AND WORRY SOME ABOUT IT, BUT SO FAR THE COURTSHIP PROSPERS. THE FITZGERALD VISIT WAS MORE OF THE SAME. IN IRELAND IT WAS SOMETHING OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS SUCCESS FOR THE RUSSIANS. APPARENTLY THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO KEEP THE SUBSTANTIVE TALKS AWAY FROM ABRASIONS, AND DESPITE OUR EFFORTS IT APPEARS TO US THE IRISH REFRAINED FROM HOLDING THE RUSSIANS' FEET TO THE FIRE ON CSCE IMPLEMENTATION AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN MATTERS. WE MUST ACCOUNT THE VISIT A SUCCESS--FOR THE RUSSIANS. AND WE CANNOT REFRAIN FROM INCLUDING GROMYKO'S CLEVER PHRASE TO DESCRIBE THE IRISH: "YOU IRISH ARE A NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY WHICH IS NON-ALIGNED TO THE NON-ALIGNED."
REND AHL

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